coastal plants_Layout 1 9/30/15 1:17 PM Page 1



NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Your yard — and the kinds of plants in it — matters to birds! As natural areas for birds continue to decrease, so do native plants and the important food sources they provide for birds.

What are native plants?

Native plants are those that occur naturally in an area. North Carolina is home to thousands of native plant species. Many are stunningly beautiful; some occur nowhere else in the world. Over many millennia, our native wildlife — including birds — have adapted to the resources provided by the native flora. Native plants are, in a real sense, "home" for our birds.

Why are native plants important for birds?

In a word: insects. Virtually all land birds — 96% — require insect food for their young. Native plants support healthy populations of insects, including caterpillars, that breeding birds feed their nestlings. However, nonnative plants contain foreign compounds that most native insects won't eat. Without insects for food, baby birds starve. By adding native plants to your yard, you can help restore the imbalance created by non-native plantings and ensure the survival of future generations of birds.

Invasive plants – avoid these!

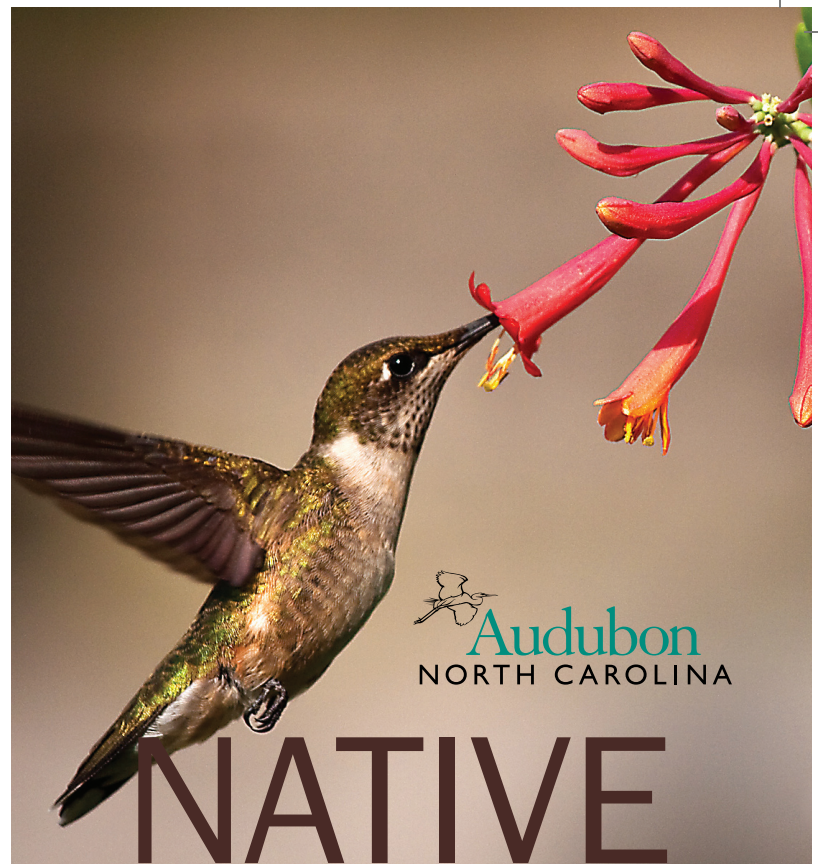
Some of the most common – or, in a few cases, "up-and-coming" – invasive species in the Coastal Plain of North Carolina are listed below.

Common name	Scientific name
Tree-of-Heaven	*Ailanthus altissima*
Mimosa, silktree	*Albizia julibrissin*
Thorny-olive	*Elaeagnus pungens*
Autumn-olive	*Elaeagnus umbellata*
Chinese privet	*Ligustrum sinense*
Sacred-bamboo	*Nandina domestica*
Common reed	*Phragmites australis*
Kudzu	*Pueraria montana*
Beach vitex	*Vitex rotundifolia*
Chinese wisteria	*Wisteria sinensis*
Oriental bittersweet	*Celastrus orbiculatus*
English ivy	*Hedera helix*
Bradford pear	*Pyrus calleryana*
Pampas grass	*Cortaderia selloana*
Chinese silvergrass	*Miscanthus sinensis*
Bamboo	*Phyllostachys* spp.
Tallowtree	*Triadica sebifera*

Additional resources regarding invasive plants are available at www.ncwildflower.org/invasives/invasives.htm

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PHOTO CREDITS
Cover – Hummingbird on Coral Honeysuckle by Chuck Carmack
Inside – Cedar Waxwing, Prothonotary Warbler, Gray Catbird by Will Stuart



COASTAL PLAIN

"It's simple: By gardening with native plants – no matter where you live or how small or large your space is – you can help sustain wildlife."

DOUG TALLAMY, BRINGING NATURE HOME

coastal plants_Layout 1 9/30/15 1:17 PM Page 4



Prothonotary Warbler



Blueberry



Gray Catbird on Beautyberry



Buttonbush



Black-eyed Susan



Red buckeye

Below are lists of native plants that provide a variety of foods for birds and that also grow well in gardens and yards.

Larval host plants

Plant these – and feed baby birds

Common name	Scientific name
Black cherry	*Prunus serotina*
River birch	*Betula nigra*
Buttonbush	*Cephalanthus occidentalis*
Blueberry	*Vaccinium* spp.
Calico aster	*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*
Carolina wild indigo	*Baptisia cinerea*
Passionflower	*Passiflora incarnata*

Berry-producing plants

Nature's energy-packed treats

Common name	Scientific name
Blackgum	*Nyssa sylvatica*
Eastern red-cedar	*Juniperus virginiana*
Flowering dogwood	*Cornus florida*
Beautyberry	*Callicarpa americana*
Yaupon holly	*Ilex vomitoria*
Lanceleaf greenbrier	*Smilax smallii*
Virginia creeper	*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*

Seed/nut-producing plants

Nutrient-rich and long-lasting

Common name	Scientific name
Oaks	*Quercus* spp.
Pines	*Pinus* spp.
Waxmyrtle	*Morella cerifera*
Black-eyed Susan	*Rudbeckia hirta*
Joe Pye weed	*Eutrochium fistulosum*
Pink muhly grass	*Muhlenbergia capillaris*

Nectar-producing plants

The sweetest things around

Common name	Scientific name
Coastal sweet pepperbush	*Clethra alnifolia*
Red buckeye	*Aesculus pavia*
Blazing-star	*Liatris spicata*
Eastern beardtongue	*Penstemon laevigatus*
Wrinkleleaf goldenrod	*Solidago rugosa*
Coral honeysuckle	*Lonicera sempervirens*
Crossvine	*Bignonia capreolata*

Are nonnative plants bad for birds?

Though often pretty, nonnatives ultimately do not provide enough resources, particularly insects, to feed baby birds and sustain healthy bird populations.

"But birds love my Privet hedge!"

Adult birds are adaptable and will readily eat the fruits of nonnative plants. Most insects, however, are not as flexible and do not feed on nonnative plants. With fewer insects, baby birds starve – and bird populations plummet.

What are invasive plants?

Invasive plants, like kudzu and Chinese privet, are nonnative species that have escaped cultivation and now overrun native vegetation. This has dire consequences for birds: less food (especially for nestlings), fewer nesting sites, and increased predation.

Online resources for native plants

- NC Native Plant Society – www.ncwildflower.org
- NC Botanical Garden – www.ncbg.unc.edu/plants-and-gardening/
- Audubon North Carolina – www.ncaudubon.org

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